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THE AIMS, DUTIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE HEAD-MASTER OF AN ENDOWED SECONDARY SCHOOL¹

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As one considers the kind of person required for the position of a head-master, there come to the mind lines of the once well-known opera *Patience*. In giving a receipt for "that popular mystery known to the world as a Heavy Dragoon" we are bidden to take:

The genius strategic of Caesar or Hannibal;
Skill of Sir Garnet in thrashing a cannibal;
Flavor of Hamlet: the Stranger, a touch of him:
Little of Manfred (but not very much of him):
Beadle of Burlington: Richardson's Show:
Mr. Micawber and Madame Tussaud,
Take of these elements all that is fusible,
Melt 'em all down in a pipkin or crucible:
Set 'em to simmer, and take off the scum,
And a Heavy Dragoon is the residuum.

At a meeting of the Head-Masters' Association, some years ago, one of its members declared that the duty of the head-master was to do the chores which the other masters would not do. And truly the chores seem numberless at times. The head-

¹ This article is the first of a series of articles by head-masters and principals treating of the administrative problems of various types of secondary schools.
—ED. *School Review*.

master is expected to decide upon the number of towels which should be supplied for every boy; to know whether the turkeys last Sunday were fresh, and if not, why not; to determine whether a boy may leave school before vacation begins, if the happiness of his family seems to be involved therein; whether the wall should be painted red or green; whether the remark of a pupil to some master should be taken seriously or not. It strikes an on-looker, no doubt, as using "five-dollar time for fifty-cent work;" and to the man himself his days occasionally appear to be spent *laboriose nihil agendo*: but in his saner moments, it is quite different. The number of towels and personal cleanliness are related to one another; cold-storage turkeys imply poor health and bad economy; the continuity of a boy's life depends upon his remaining at the school through the term; upon the attitude taken toward a boy's manner may depend his courtesy through life. Dr. Thring, one of the greatest of modern school-masters, used frequently to speak of the "almighty wall." It was his opinion that the arrangement of the buildings, and not only that but also the form and color of a boy's surroundings, made a lasting impression upon his character.

The head-master must have an eye to all these things. If they bore him and his delight is in teaching alone, he should be an instructor in a college or in a day school. If, on the other hand, they are the only things which make his heart leap up, then the probability is that the world has lost an efficient business man. When everything that concerns the fabric of the school and all things that have a bearing upon the development of boys in any part of their nature appeal to a man, then he cannot ask for a happier lot than to be the head-master of a boarding-school. Even then, it will constantly be "for a care" to him to avoid missing the forest for the trees.

With the head-master rests the task of determining the much-vexed question of the school curriculum, whether it shall run upon modern progressive lines, and, if so, what these lines may be; or whether it shall adhere in large measure to the conservative programme which retains even Greek as a regular study.

As soon as the universities have decided between the varying

claims of new subjects, the schools will be called to meet these problems. At present, the studies of a school which sends practically all its pupils to college are generally determined by the university authorities.

Under these circumstances, the head-master is comparatively free to give his time and attention to the important work of his life, which lies in relation to persons. Upon this depends what is vaguely called the atmosphere of the school.

First of all, there are the head-master's relations with the other masters. It is not unusual, so biographies of school-masters bear witness, for a man who is competent with boys to fail to understand and to work peaceably with his colleagues. Thus was it with Thring, and with Almond Loretto, the story of whose life has lately inspired us. And indeed it is a difficult part of the problem. A school cannot well be governed, as is a college, by a faculty deciding measures by a majority vote. The world outside—which means especially the parents—holds the head-master personally responsible for the management of the school and for the care of the individual boys. One has only to consider how the blame for anything which is even remotely connected with a school is visited upon the head-master. Incidentally, it may be remarked that there is often attributed to him the credit which should go to the other men. In the boarding-school of moderate size, between one hundred and twenty-five and one hundred and seventy-five boys, it is expected that the head-master shall reach and be responsible for the final decision in every question. It is his privilege, however, to be in close touch with a number of men whose knowledge and judgment are available and whom he is careful to consult on all important questions, and he should be sufficiently open-minded to allow their views to influence him. Thus he may and should speak of the government of the school as "we" and still be willing to accept personally the outcome of any policy or action.

The classroom is the kingdom of the teacher, to whom it belongs. The freedom of it may be given to the head-master and he ought to know the kind of things that are being carried on therein; but, except in the case of an untried man, the proba-

bility is that the teacher knows as much of his subject as the head-master and very likely more, and that his methods are much better calculated to express his personality. In connection with this point, the remarks of an educator, which were found in a school magazine not long ago, sound remote:

In all his dealings with teachers, the principal should show a wide toleration and a beneficent consistency in word and deed. Social groups of teachers should not be looked upon with suspicion. Slight errors of individual teachers should be overlooked, especially if the work on the average is good. A principal should not take one mistake which may have offended him and hold it over a teacher's head all the term. Differences of a personal nature should have no influence on official actions. . . . Justice is a difficult thing to procure, but an approximation of it is possible. Careful study of the official requirements, impartial weighing of evidence, disregard of any personal feelings or emotional bias is necessary. Teachers should exist for the principal as human co-operative agents of a certain efficiency, and this efficiency should always have in view the good of the child.

In the boarding-school teachers certainly exist for the good of the boy, but there is no such formal relationship between the head-master and his assistants as becomes necessary in the public school. With us, the head-master, or principal, and the other masters are men who are united first of all by devotion to a common cause or loyalty to an institution and then become friends, one of the other, through their love for the school and its boys.

In his relations with the boys, the head-master should be first of all a teacher. It is a significant fact that often the principal's room in the school building is called the "office." From this too often follows the modern form of the ancient fallacy that there is inevitably a great gulf between the head-master and the boys. In his "office," he becomes a man of business to older people, to the boys he stands for the policeman. Let the room be a "study," and let the head-master—whatever work he may be obliged to neglect—refuse to surrender the privilege and the joy of teaching. He may not have the opportunities for study which come to the other men, but he can with effort keep abreast of the time in his particular subject. Some compensation for a lack of erudition, if it exists, may be found in the fact that the

boys will be inclined to study harder for the head-master than for the others, and that in teaching he learns a good deal about a boy which he can get in no other way.

The discipline of the head-master must be such as to make itself felt behind the dealings of the other men. This seems to be the sacrifice which he is obliged to make—that he shall be held in some awe rather than govern by affection, as he fain would do. There arise occasions not infrequently in which he must deal cogently with a boy who has failed to be impressed with the treatment that he has received at another master's hands. Questions, too, as to where the right lies in a disagreement between a master and a boy come up for his decision. In the latter, there will have to be a good deal of the *suaviter in modo*, while in the former instance, there is need of that quality which prompted a Rugby boy to write of his head-master

Temple is a brute, but he is a just brute.

In dealing with moral offenses also, for which in some schools ordinary punishment is thought to be unfitting, the head-master to whom evil is reported must have established himself in the mind of the boy in such a way that his words and still more his feelings will make a solemn impression upon the offender.

In addition to teaching and disciplinary matters of his office the head-master brings himself into contact with the boys in a variety of informal ways which indeed make up the greater part of human relationship. He takes the opportunity to talk with a boy in regard to anything that concerns the lad's life. If the head-master is fortunate enough to be also the chaplain of the school he can get to understand the boy's spiritual nature, or the boy can get to understand the master's, which may perhaps be as helpful; and at such a time as confirmation, when new thoughts and high ideals arise within a boy, the head-master may hope to have a part in the boy's great decision.

There are numerous other ways in which the head-master meets the boys, in chance conversations, in games, when they are looking on or playing together; and in the almost constant intercourse which exists between those who spend the greater part

of their time under the same roof. The greatest intimacy comes when the boys have reached the highest class in the school. Then they are invited to co-operate with the authorities of the school in the management of the brethren. All the members of the Sixth Form may have responsibility for some of the boys, and some of them for all the boys. A strong tie is at once made as soon as a boy attempts to do the same work as a master. This gives a splendid opportunity for genuine friendship in a common cause; and in the case of prefects or of boys to whom the largest responsibility is given, they become fellow-workers with all the masters, and with the head-master especially they live on terms of free and cordial comradeship. Only the beginnings of this form of co-operative government have been made. The mighty influence which may be brought to bear in this way upon the character and the development of boys will be revealed when men of sufficient breadth of statesmanship will devote themselves to the education of youth.

This friendship which should exist in the latter part of a boy's career at school may be retained and deepened as he grows into manhood. With the growth of our great universities there has come a certain impersonal aspect in college life which may be supplemented by the school-master's still retaining an interest in the boy throughout his career. To his school, if it be within fairly easy distance, the college man will naturally return. When he has begun his career in the larger world, he may be followed with interest by his head-master, who will hear from him of his engagement or marriage, of his success or failure, and who will not fail to keep in mind the memory of the boy upon his birthday or some other anniversary. On the other hand, the graduates of the school, realizing that they are an integral part of it, will see to it that a sufficient endowment be raised to insure its permanence; they will act as representatives upon its governing body, and by and by, sending their sons to their school, they will again be vitally interested in all that relates to its welfare.

Thus far of the people who have most to do with the destinies of the school and with the activities of the head-master.

There are still two other classes which have to be considered;

first, the parents. Various are the opinions which men entertain of the relations between the parents and the school. One man, who was displeased with the school for which he had registered his son as candidate, requested that his name be removed from the "list of patrons of the institution." This was an extreme view of the importance of the parent. On the other side, one recalls the description of a school where the masters were wont to remark to one another, when a parent hailed in sight, "Let us get away and let the head-master interview these people; that is what he is paid for." A more human estimate was made by the president of one of our universities who, upon being told that he had greatly improved during his term of office, replied, "No man can come into contact with parents for many years, as I have done, without being a better man for it." And this is the experience of many school-masters, I doubt not. There are limitations and faults which may be fairly laid at the door of the modern American parent. He, or she—a pronoun of either gender may be equally employed—is inclined to be timid in "their" attitude toward the boy. They lack the courage to say "no," a defect which in a former generation was ascribed to the child alone. They have a tendency to overindulge their children, to wish to make life easy for them, a natural result of which is that the children sometimes lack intellectual and moral and physical fiber. Many other limitations might be pointed out, but when they all have been declared, it still is true that the American parent of these days has as profound a love for his child as parents have ever had, that he desires for the child better opportunities than he himself has enjoyed, and that he will co-operate with a master who is honestly working for the highest interests of the boy.

More remote from the school than these and yet of importance in its life are the people who live in the vicinity of the school, fellow-townsmen and neighbors. It is for the head-master to see to it that there shall not spring up any trace of the old feeling of antagonism which originated in England and was transported to this country under the name of "Town and Gown." The school should be ready to recognize its responsibilities to the

dwellers round about. The possession of more abundant power than it need use for itself it may well exercise in establishing missions and boys' clubs, and in joining any movement which makes for the good of the community. There is no inevitable rivalry between an educational institution and the town in which it is situated. American boys of this generation are quickly responsive to the call to service and recognize that a primary element in this is courtesy. I recall an instance where a boy who had got into trouble by riding his bicycle on the sidewalk after being warned by the town constable remarked to the man in the presence of the head-master, "I did not know you were a policeman. I thought you were a tramp." This lack of consideration was quickly atoned for by a considerable fine which was inflicted upon the boy at the insistence of the constable. It is one of the few cases which I can recall where the relations between that school and its neighbors have been strained.

There exists also a certain duty on the part of the head-master to attend educational conferences and to take an active part in them, to lecture or to preach in colleges or other schools, to contribute an occasional article upon some phase of education. Activities of this kind, even though they seem to interfere with the regular labors with which the measure is already heaped up and overflowing, have some value in their influence upon the school. It is undoubtedly good for the members of a school faculty, and the head-master among them, to have some outside interests which will prevent their accepting the fate of becoming pedagogues which the world is prone to fasten upon them. These things, however, are incidental. They form something in the nature of an avocation to men who are summoned to a great calling—a calling which was highly esteemed in the days when education was a smaller thing than it is now. Today it is equal to the greatest of the professions, for in a Christian country the aim of the school-master is nothing less—as one who has been a great educator has remarked—than to help his pupils to become citizens of the commonwealth of Christ.